

NOTE

WHY NOT CONSTRUCTIVE WORKER

Bharat Jhunjhunwala writes :

President Harry Truman of the United States once said that he wanted a 'one-handed' economist. Economists often say, "on the one hand such may happen, on the other hand such may happen." Economics, like most social sciences, does not give clear-cut answers. Economists have to intuitively assess whether fiscal deficit may be increased or decreased. The same applies to all professions such as doctors, accountants and lawyers as well. The problem is that this assessment is often made by the experts according to their personal circumstances, not according to the needs of the people. For example, an economist who is a government employee is likely to suggest increase in the role of government so that his Minister gets more opportunities to appoint his cronies. Wage-earning professionals are likely to support the views of their employers. There is a need for self-employed professionals to make a dispassionate assessment and educate the people.

The importance of advice given by self-employed persons has been accepted by the greatest of our thinkers. Two days before his death Gandhi had suggested that the Congress party should dissolve itself and congressmen should reconstitute themselves into an organization of Constructive Workers. His idea was that the Constructive Workers will make their livelihood by teaching, farming or similar vocation. Lenin had made distinction between the 'Party' and the 'State'. The Communist Party should be rooted in the masses and give directions to the State. This responsibility was given to the *fakir* in the Indian tradition. The fakir was asked to live a life of simplicity and abstinence and check the atrocities of the king. The common stand in the three traditions is that of an entity that stays out of power but acts as a check on the ruler. This entity was called *Constructive Worker*, *Communist Party* or *Fakir* variously.

The responsibility of containing the government in the present democratic system lies with the judiciary or the Rajya Sabha. However, this check does not work because the judges and members of the Rajya Sabha are appointed by, or owe allegiance to the same political parties that they are supposed to check, the judiciary and Rajya Sabha do not check the bad governance of the cabinet. There is a need to rebuild the tradition of Constructive Worker into the modern political system.

A critical difference between Gandhi and Lenin on the one side and the Indian tradition on the other, is regarding the structure of this independent entity. Gandhi wanted the Constructive Workers to become members of the Lok Sewak Sangh and Lenin wanted them to become members of the Communist Party. The Indian tradition, on the contrary, speaks of the Fakir remaining unorganized and living a life of frugality and independence. His main task was to think independently without influence of any organization. Soviet Russia and Sarvodaya movement have both become non-existent while the Indian tradition lives on despite its ups and downs.

The Constructive Workers became dependent on the Sarva Sewa Sangh for their livelihood. These organizations, in due course of time, started taking grants from the government or foreign donors-the very entities on which they were expected to exercise control. Indira Gandhi appointed the Kudal Commission during the Emergency and broke the back of these organizations. Such would not have happened if the Constructive Workers had maintained self-employment. The Gandhians have nowadays been limited to living off the alms given by the government. A similar fate befell the Communist Party in Russia. Stalin got himself appointed both as the General Secretary of the Communist Party and Head of the State. The two entities were coalesced into one. The Communist Party lost its independence from the State. No check remained on Stalin and his actions led to then ultimate collapse of the Soviet system. Relatively speaking, the Indian society has remained stable.

Karl Marx had said that material conditions of existence determine the consciousness of men. Thus, a person living off the Lok Sewak Sangh or the Communist Party spontaneously starts to think as directed by the leaders and loses his intellectual independence.

The self-employed are free to select the type of clients he works with. The wage earner is less free in this regard. Thus those seeking to establish good governance or to give correct advice to the government should opt for self-employment. The failure of Gandhian ideas and Communism can be attributed to a large extent to their failure to practice this. ~~██████~~